

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

UNPLANNED GROWTH, THIS PROBLEM MUST BE ADDRESSED

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, on the front page of newspapers across America today there is another sad episode, this time in Alabama, of reckless behavior on the road, talking about road rage where a woman killed another after a traffic confrontation.

The story in this morning's Post is replete with examples of how their lives were stressed as a result of unplanned growth, congestion, traffic and sprawl in their community. Last week, I discussed at some length on the floor of this Chamber the very real health implications of unplanned growth across America.

Before Congress adjourns, I think it is important for us to reflect on the fact that how we plan and build our community makes a huge difference, and I think it important for us to reflect on it here in the Washington, D.C. capital area.

While I personally welcome the attention that has been received by the District of Columbia in activities recently for the District, it is not enough for us to focus on livability just as it relates to Washington, D.C. We need to be thinking broadly about the health and livability of the entire 17-government region in metropolitan Washington, D.C. We cannot separate the health of our region from larger issues.

Citizens throughout this region, as I meet with them, are asking themselves the right questions. Is it not possible for people in our Nation's capital to think more comprehensively about land use and transportation and put those pieces together in a thoughtful way? Is it possible to avoid the obvious disconnect between massive infrastructure investments and access, like we have seen the marvelous front page stories and pictures where the Redskins stadium has inspired massive gridlock, traffic congestion and frustration? People are asking whether or not the Federal Government cannot be leading by example here in metropolitan areas, using the resources and presence of the Federal Government to make a difference?

People are asking, is it not possible in the metropolitan capital region for us to take a tiny percentage of the rev-

enues that are generated from new development and growth to help solve regional problems on a regional basis?

Why do we not, in this region, recognize that unbalanced growth, when high activity on the western end and the decline in the eastern portion of the region has huge negative implications for both areas?

There is a marvelous document that has been prepared by the Brookings Institution Center for Urban and Metropolitan Policy called *A Region Divided*, a Study of Growth in Greater Washington, D.C. It documents the great strengths that we have in the capital region, the wealth, the booming economy, the affordable housing, the brain power, and the unifying forces that we have with the Federal Government, the media, the historical context, but we are currently a region divided, as documented by this report.

I hope that as we in Congress begin a new year, that every Member in the House and Senate, as they review their agenda to make America better, will review this report and reflect on ways that we can help make our capital region one of America's most livable communities where our families are safe, healthy and economically secure.

THE TIME HAS PASSED FOR JUST TALKING AND RHETORIC. LET US DO SOMETHING ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Social Security. We have heard a lot of talk about it.

The President 2 years ago in his State of the Union message said, let us start putting Social Security first. Republicans have said that and Democrats have said that. So we are doing a lot of talking but we are not doing a great deal of putting Social Security first.

We have taken maybe a giant step in the conviction of the Republicans not to spend the Social Security surplus, and so we have made a decision that despite the fact that there are more revenues coming into the Federal Government than we have seen for a long, long time, and the revenues coming in are both what is called on budget, which means the income tax and all other revenues except for the Social Security tax, and Social Security tax is now 12.4 percent of most of what everybody makes, what is happening is it is a pay-as-you-go program. Social Security gets their Social Security, the FICA tax, the payroll tax, money in every week and almost immediately it is sent out in benefits.

Since we dramatically increased the Social Security tax in 1983, there is a little more Social Security tax coming

in than there is required to pay current benefits. That is what is called the Social Security surplus, and what Republicans decided several months ago is that we were going to hold the line on the budget not to spend the Social Security surplus for other government programs and instead use that money to pay down what I call the Wall Street debt or the debt held by the public.

I have introduced a Social Security bill every year since I have been in Congress, every session since I have been in Congress since 1993. I just introduced the most recent improved Social Security bill last month, and it was based on our task force report, our bipartisan task force report, where Republicans and Democrats came together to agree on the findings. The bill I introduced reflects these findings.

Let me briefly go over this chart. Number one, it allows workers to invest a portion of their Social Security tax. It starts at 2.5 percent of your taxable payroll. That is now \$76,000. Over the years, it increases. It can only be used for retirement but it is in the worker's name so that politicians in Washington cannot steal it like they have in the past.

In 1997, when Social Security money was short, we passed a law that says we are going to reduce benefits and increase taxes. Again in 1983, when Social Security revenues were short of the requirement for benefits, we increased taxes and cut benefits. Let us not do that again.

This bill does not increase taxes. Seventy-two percent of all the workers in the United States now pay more in the Social Security tax than they do in the income tax. Let us not increase taxes.

It repeals the Social Security earnings test so senior citizens, if they want to work, do not have their Social Security check reduced for the amount they work. That needs to be changed to allow seniors to work if they want to.

It gives workers the choice to retire as early as 59½ years old and start taking their personal retirement savings account out.

We also have a provision that encourages individuals, if they want to wait until they are 70, it substantially increases their benefits by 8 percentage points for every year that they delay taking their Social Security check. In other words, if they delay 3 years, it is a 24 percent increase in what they would otherwise get. One year would be 8 percent; 2 years 16 percent.

It gives each spouse equal shares of the personal retirement savings account and increases widow and widower benefits up to 110 percent.

As I met with widows and widowers, they said, look, you are dramatically taking so much of the Social Security check away when one of the spouses die that we cannot afford to live in our home anymore.

So we increased that up to 110 percent of the maximum benefit they were getting.

It reinforces the safety net for low income and disabled workers. It passes